

**Charter Transition Team Meeting
August 28, 2007
4:30 PM
Library Conference Room, 6th Floor**

Attendance

Members: Legislator Gary Bischoff, Chairman
Legislator Phil Terpening
Legislator Wayne Harris
Dr. Gerald Benjamin, SUNY New Paltz
Marianne Collins, SUNY Ulster
Louis Klein, Attorney
Excused – Legislator Robert Parete

Staff: County Attorney's Office – Bea Havranek, Eric Stock
Administrative Office – Arthur Smith
Legislative Office – Kathy Mihm, Meg Dellay

Public: Lee Cane, Renee Sachs – LWV, Allan Wikman

Gary Bischoff called the meeting to order at 4:35pm.

Gary opened the meeting with a suggestion. After attending the Jail Investigation Hearings, Gary suggested that Charter committee members sign-off on minutes, indicating they read the minutes and agreed to the content and decisions made. (Usually only standing committees require the sign-off of minutes. The Charter Transition Team is a special committee and minute signing is not the norm.) All committee members agreed to sign-off, and June 28, 2007 minutes were circulated with sign-off sheet attached.

Highlights:

- 1. Paralegal Effort (Bea)**
- 2. Codification (Kathy)**
- 3. Org Chart - Revisions/Workshop**
- 4. Response Letters – List of Concerns/Questions**
- 5. Letter to State Reps re \$\$**
- 6. Other Business**

1. **Paralegal Effort** – Bea reported that Eric and Meg continue to work on changes to Rules of Order which are almost complete. Bea will present to the committee soon for their final review and recommendations to the full Legislature.

Bea is working on how the charter can be amended, if necessary. She is also working with the Ethics Commission on an Ethics Law - 25 pages long - with references to the County Executive.

2. **Codification** – Kathy distributed two documents from Debbie Tuszynski, Editor, General Code Services in Rochester:

- 1) First Draft of the Charter
- 2) Sullivan County Administrative Code.

The first draft of the Charter has been codified (renumbered). From this framework we will be able to work on an Administrative Code that will enable us to address issues more readily than amending the Charter. The Administrative Code of Sullivan County is useful to view because Ulster's Code will be similar in appearance.

Kathy also reported Debbie sent a memo stating they are now in the process of developing a manuscript - taking our local laws and putting into a system - for delivery in mid-December (ahead of January '08 deadline). Kathy is very pleased with Deb's efforts thus far. We sent permissible changes back to Debbie last month which appear in the revised Draft Charter (e.g., Vacancy of Comptroller was out of place in original Charter as Article XXI; moved to Draft Charter as Article IX Comptroller, C-60 Vacancy.) A copy will be available in electronic form on the county web site.

3. **Org Chart Revisions/Workshop** – Marianne Collins suggested at the June meeting – and members agreed - that the committee could hold workshop meetings in-between monthly meetings to focus on a particular topic. Her interest was in the aggregation of departments. Marianne volunteered to facilitate the first workshop.

Gary mentioned it might take a couple of workshops to address this issue. Currently, Meg has put into electronic form the Organizational Chart that Gary created on large posters and presented at previous meetings (which Gary tried to organize as it stipulates in the Charter and from UC org charts with four councils/units now used by the county).

Marianne believes it very helpful to view the 55 departments as separate pieces to move around and look at...some moves will be less popular...best of our ability to make some of these consolidations that are manageable...modifications will come to pass as exec sees fit.

It was agreed to hold the first workshop on Monday, September 10, 2007 at 7:30pm in the Library Conference Room. All interested members and staff are invited to attend.

4. Response Letters – List of Concerns/Questions

Meg compiled a list of issues raised in the Response Letters from Department Heads (handouts from April/May Charter meetings). A number of concerns need to be first addressed by the County Attorney's office. Bea mentioned that some issues can be addressed in the Administrative Code. Gary suggested, for example, with Consumer Fraud/Affairs, it is possible the County Exec appoints the Director with the DA overseeing day-to-day operations...we can set up the organization as a recommendation to the County Executive. Handouts of List of Concerns ****see Attachment****

What departments did NOT respond? Who was the memo sent to? How many departments are there? Meg will research.

5. Letter to State Reps – Gary reminded members that when he wrote state officials in March requesting State reimbursement for charter creation or revision expenditures, he was told there were no funds available. Gary will write again in September to be included in next year's budget.

Jerry Benjamin said he had talked to Kyle Weber about this issue. He offered to talk to someone in the Governor's Office on an informal basis and follow up. Regarding reforms and appropriations for funds, there are several hundred applications. Jerry is attending a conference in October on how to apply for these funds.

Jerry also started a discussion about the final product of this group. He spoke about a possible memorandum to the Legislature, stating here's an organizational structure, space structure, and some kind of a transitional briefing for new officials. He's thinking along the lines of a two or three

page brief, giving the incoming person what we think is important for facilitation of transition. We need to discuss the work being done now by the Transition Team.

Other members contributed to this discussion, stating a strategic plan would be a good idea, similar to state government anticipating a new governor...the bottom line is what would serve the county best? Gary acknowledged point - no action taken at this time.

Bea offered her estimate to complete Administrative Code by late summer/early fall for Legislature to review.

Michael Hein joined the meeting (while Jerry was talking) and suggested the perspective of what does perfect look like, then dial back. He stressed the importance of a living, breathing document, to give stability to current government.

6. Other Business

Jerry Benjamin wondered if it was still useful for Mark Thomas from Chautauqua to come and speak about his Charter experience. Gary said yes, considering the above conversation; all concurred. Jerry will invite Mark for next meeting, September 25th at 4:30pm in the Library Conference Room.

Marianne Collins reported on her research of Community College budgets and any changes with the Charter. Budget is still determined by the Board of Trustees, who present it to the Legislature in May or June where it is voted on. Then college budget becomes part of County Executive's Budget.

Meg distributed a handout entitled "Charter Counties with County Executives" from Steve Acquario. ****see Attachment****

Steve offered at our June meeting to send to us a chart that shows the number of Deputy County Executives and Assistants to the County Executive in various counties. It should be noted that although there are no/few assistant/deputies in some of the larger counties, it's possible that some department heads are acting as deputies, with other departments answering to them.

Meeting Adjourned @ 5:50pm